

**From:** James O'Keefe III  
**Sent:** Fri, 29 Sep 2017 18:50:19 -0400 (EDT)  
**To:** Austin Wright[Austin@projectveritas.com]; William Keiper[wkeiper@projectveritas.com]; Russell Verney[rverney@projectveritas.com]  
**Subject:** Re: Michigan

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R talking to [REDACTED]

We think it'll be fine. Just more evidence they are trying to bleed us dry. We will turn lemons into lemonade.

Continue to harass [REDACTED]

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**From:** Austin Wright <Austin@projectveritas.com>  
**Date:** Friday, September 29, 2017 at 6:13 PM  
**To:** James O'Keefe III <james@projectveritas.com>, William Keiper <wkeiper@projectveritas.com>, Russell Verney <rverney@projectveritas.com>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Michigan

Hmm.. really hope this doesn't hurt us with the needed funding. I've called [REDACTED] twice and [REDACTED] and JO should ping [REDACTED]  
Thanks!

**Austin Wright**  
Project Veritas  
1214 W. Boston Post Road No. 145  
Mamaroneck, NY 10543  
Office: 914-908-2300


Begin forwarded message:


**From:** James O'Keefe III <james@projectveritas.com>  
**Date:** September 29, 2017 at 5:30:10 PM EDT  
**Subject:** Michigan

We don't comment on any investigations real or imagined.  
It is extraordinary they would get a Judge to block us from publishing any information. That's insane.  
We are playing at a very high level with very sophisticated and determined enemies.  
We are running into a firing squad and the only solution is to run towards the fire. Nothing is going to stop this train.

We have an executed tv deal and the stories will go out in a little over a week.  
We will revise plans where necessary on our education stories.  
<https://theintercept.com/2017/09/29/james-okeefe-project-veritas-michigan-judge-block/>

**CONSERVATIVE PROVOCATEUR JAMES O'KEEFE'S GROUP HIT WITH RESTRAINING ORDER, BLOCKING LATEST STING**

 <https://cdn01.theintercept.com/wp-uploads/sites/1/2017/05/ryan-grimm-1494271844-crop-1495557756.jpg>

 [https://cdn01.theintercept.com/wp-uploads/sites/1/2017/07/Maryam-Saleh\\_avatar\\_1500830006-1500830006.jpg](https://cdn01.theintercept.com/wp-uploads/sites/1/2017/07/Maryam-Saleh_avatar_1500830006-1500830006.jpg)

 <https://cdn01.theintercept.com/wp-uploads/sites/1/2017/08/cohen-head-1501865876-440x440.jpg>

Ryan Grim, Maryam Saleh, Rachel M. Cohen

September 29 2017, 1:21 p.m.

**A MICHIGAN JUDGE** barred conservative provocateur James O'Keefe's Project Veritas organization from publishing documents or recordings of union officials, finding that the defendants likely planned to use the information to characterize the Michigan affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in a false light.

The judge also ruled that it appeared likely the information was illegally obtained. Project Veritas and the operative at the heart of the sting were served the injunction on Friday afternoon, a union official told The Intercept.

"I don't have any comment until I can see what you're referring to," O'Keefe said, when reached by The Intercept. The sting has not been previously reported. O'Keefe did not appear to have known his operative had been exposed.

"Nobody's been served," said Russell Verney, executive director of Project Veritas, saying that nobody has put documents in their hands. "We don't comment on investigations, either real or imagined ones," he said. Andrew Crook, an AFT spokesperson, said the union has a UPS confirmation of delivery, which he said meets the Michigan legal standard for service; Crook provided the UPS confirmation to The Intercept.

The union group quietly filed the lawsuit on Wednesday accusing Project Veritas of infiltrating and illegally gathering proprietary information from AFT Michigan over the summer, including by surreptitiously recording office conversations. Michigan Circuit Court Judge Brian R. Sullivan granted the group's request for an emergency injunction barring the defendants from disseminating said information.

"We intend to pursue their activity to the fullest extent of the laws," AFT President Randi Weingarten told The Intercept.

She said that the union was most concerned not with Project Veritas uncovering something untoward, but that they may heavily edit the video or take a remark out of context. "Our worst-case scenario is what they do in their deception and what they do in their distortion," she said.

Weingarten said she did not know the substance on the recordings. "I am sure in a union office, just like in any other office setting, around the water-cooler there are comments that are made that nobody would want to see on the front pages of newspapers. Do I know what they are? No."

According to the complaint, political operative Marisa Jorge posed as a University of Michigan student interested in becoming a teacher and applied for a summer internship with the teachers union. (Verney, the Project Veritas executive director, said he knows Marisa Jorge, but wouldn't confirm or deny whether she works for the organization.) Jorge was hired as an intern in May, and over the course of three months, she gathered information that exceeded the scope of her duties, the lawsuit alleges. For example, she showed a particular interest in employees who were disciplined for inappropriate sexual interactions with students. On more than one occasion, the lawsuit alleges, Jorge was found

sitting alone in other employees' offices, accessing information she had no right to.

Jorge told her internship bosses that she wanted to be a second-grade teacher, so they arranged for her to visit classrooms. She asked to attend bargaining sessions and, through the course of her work, was given access to confidential databases, according to the lawsuit. Her co-workers had no reason to believe she was not who she claimed to be.

"Defendant's purpose was to use private, proprietary information to attempt to embarrass the Plaintiff and adversely impact labor organizations representing public schools," the lawsuit said. "Plaintiff believes that Defendant Jorge and PV" — Project Veritas — "intended to disclose private and proprietary information to the public at large. Defendant has engaged in such behavior on numerous occasions in the past."

Weingarten said that Jorge was trusted by the staff. "People embraced her, she went to people's homes, she went out to meals," she said.

They became suspicious when, after her internship ended, Jorge returned and asked if there was more work to be done. The staff wondered, wait, wasn't she supposed to be back at school at the University of Michigan? They then swapped notes, and it was soon clear they'd been had. They searched for images of O'Keefe operatives, and found Jorge's photo from her unsuccessful attempts to infiltrate the inaugural protests. They also discovered that she is a graduate of Virginia's Liberty University.

The lawsuit accuses Jorge of fraudulent misrepresentation, trespass, eavesdropping, and theft. It also accuses Jorge and Project Veritas of conspiring to infiltrate AFT Michigan, gather and copy proprietary information, and disseminate that information to paint the union group in a false light.

By granting a temporary restraining order, Sullivan has indicated his belief that the allegations are more than likely to be true and that the benefit of barring the defendants from disseminating the information Jorge collected outweighs the harm of suppressing her speech. The injunction will stay in place for at least 14 days, and the case is set for a hearing on October 5.

Michigan is a hotbed in the fight between public schools, whose teachers AFT represents, and the charter school movement. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's super-wealthy family has been the most powerful and influential player in the charter school movement in the state, generally, and Detroit in particular. With a net worth of well over \$5 billion, the DeVos family has contributed at least \$100 million to Michigan political campaigns and conservative causes over the past two decades.

O’Keefe has “mentioned her specifically in the past few weeks,” Weingarten said, referring to DeVos. “Let’s put it this way: The Michigan story under DeVos’s advocacy is one that has really hurt children.” (A call to DeVos’s foundation was not immediately returned.)

This would not be the first time Project Veritas targeted a labor organization that represents public school employees. Founder James O’Keefe in 2010 infiltrated the New Jersey Education Association Leadership Conference and produced a project called “Teachers Union Gone Wild.” Last summer, the group produced another video purporting to show a New Jersey middle school teacher offering journalists cocaine at a 2015 union convention. Following the video release, O’Keefe went on the radio to say his teacher union exposés are not over.

O’Keefe made his name in 2009 by helping to bring down ACORN, a liberal community-organizing group. The next year, he and three others walked into the New Orleans office of Sen. Mary Landrieu dressed as telephone repairmen as part of an undercover operation, and he was arrested and ultimately convicted of entering federal property under false pretenses. In 2011, O’Keefe released undercover conversations with two high-ranking NPR executives, forcing them to step down. He recently turned his sights to CNN, releasing an undercover video of a CNN producer saying the network’s coverage of possible collusion between President Donald Trump’s campaign and Russia was “mostly bullshit.”

Trump’s foundation donated \$10,000 to Project Veritas one month before Trump announced his candidacy.

O’Keefe and his group were hit with a \$1 million lawsuit in June after sending an operative undercover to work as an intern with Democratic campaign consultants Democracy Partners.

/ James O’Keefe  
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